

\$2.95 USA \$4.75 CAN/UK £1.25 UK

CEREBUS mothers & daughters

30

F I R S T B L O O D



180
MAR

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

Larry Marder got a call from Image.

Rumors swirled through the industry about an outside guy being called in to help the lads get their business house in order. Naturally (the industry being altogether clueless about what is actually going on in comics), most of the guesses centered on the usual assortment of cheap-suit hangers-on, paper shufflers, incompetent apologists and rhetoric-mongers. Fortunately, the Image guys are not stupid. They knew enough to avoid the business-as-usual folk who sell their services to the highest bidder and who tell their employers exactly what those employers want to hear (the price varies according to their ability to create the perception that ass-kissing is expertise). Larry, for his part, knew enough not to get hired full-time or walk in with demands for a guaranteed five-year contract, a company car, unlimited expense account, corner office and the rest of that stuff that gives the cheap suits their little hard-ons.

Larry signed on to help: as a consultant.

Larry made a trip out to Lalaland (California, for the Californians reading this) and just sat back and watched what was going on. Made some notes. Asked a bunch of questions. Answered a bunch of questions. I talked to him when he got back. His verdict?

Image was a mess.

(Note the past tense there, all you creative types who have been holding wakes prematurely, gleefully adhering to the notion that it is absolutely necessary for creative people to be cheap-suit-underling-guns-for-hire. You know who you are).

Larry said he thought he could help fix it. I expressed my doubts. There are few people I will give the benefit of the doubt to when I think they're wrong, but Larry is definitely at the top of that list.

'Dave,' Larry says to me in that way he has that tells you he's done a lot of thinking before he opened his mouth, 'whether you like it or not, we started something at the Northampton Creators Summit in 1988 with the Creators Bill of Rights. It set things in motion and it took a number of strange turns. But the upshot is, directly or indirectly, it led to Image. Image is not self-publishing, but it is a creator-controlled company and that's a lot of what we spent two days arguing about around those old shoved-together tables downstairs at the Northampton Inn. If Image succeeds or fails, self-publishing will be as solid as ever. You'll do fine. *Bone* will do fine. But if Image fails, it'll set back the cause of creative freedom and creator control a generation or more. It'll say to the young, hot artists coming along that you *can't* do it on your own — that you need to attach yourself to a big company — that you have to sign that contract. You *can't* go out into the wilderness and build something from scratch with your own two hands and whatever creative abilities you have.'

I don't know if Larry can do it. It's going to hurt his own chances of getting *Beanworld* back on track this year (and maybe next year as well). It definitely postpones the *Beans*, *Bones*, *Hepcats* and an *Aardvark* gig for at least that long. I wouldn't even consider doing it without Larry and I'm pretty sure that Martin and Jeff feel the same way.

But I know for a fact that the Image guys are listening to what he says; and I know that if you listen to Larry and do what he says, things come right a lot more often than they go wrong. A lot more often.

He's still freelance, still just a paid consultant. But he's also, officially, the Executive Director of Image Comics, the highest authority next to the founding creators themselves. He's also prepared to cut and run the moment Image starts changing into 'just another company', 'creators fucking over creators'. He knows I'll be watching him (and them) on that one like a hawk.

Another thing that Larry said:

'The direct market as conceived, as invented by Phil Seuling and Sol Harrison in the mid-seventies, ended the day that Todd McFarlane and Jim Lee walked out of that meeting in Terry Stewart's office.

'Image is *not* the New Marvel . . .

'Image is just the first Image.'

I think there is a good case to be made for that, and that Image, even with its false starts, flaws and mistakes, still represents the first, best hope for loosening the stranglehold that business has had throughout the history of the comic-book field. And that Larry Marder represents the first, best hope of helping them to realise their full potential.

I wish him the best of luck.

CEREBUS

NO. 180

MARCH 1994

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

**MOTHERS
&
DAUGHTERS**
a novel

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 151 to
Cerebus 162)
Flight

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 163 to
Cerebus 174)
Women

BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 175 to
Cerebus 186)
Reads

BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 187 to
Cerebus 200)

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Ascension Part seven —

OPENING —

Victor Reid walked through the kitchen doorway, stiffly, clutching the current issue of *Reads Informer* in his left hand. His right hand bore traces and splatterings of strained spinach. His feet echoed with a hollow sound on the polished hardwood floor leading to the cream-coloured sitting room.

'Victor?'

The voice of his wife, Sarah, followed him, seeming to come from a great distance as he crossed to the spiral staircase which led up to the second floor. A subtle note of casual concern adhered to her enunciation of his given name. He reached the staircase and began to climb. Slowly.

'Victor?'

Now the second syllable climbed an octave or two, pregnant with mild confusion and amiable condescension, the tone an adult might use in addressing a child, wearing freshly laundered clothing, about to sit down in a mud puddle.

'Victor, you haven't finished feeding the baby!'

The sentence was a song, each word a note enhancing, emphasizing its predecessor. It was a concise melody, edged with imminent consequence, confrontational, accusatory . . . motherly, in a word. It demanded that a defense of his action be mounted, even as it implied that his action was indefensible. It was as ancient and as natural as childbirth itself, shaded as it was with pastel hues of martyrdom. It was the voice, the song of someone labouring under a great and solitary burden, unjustly borne. Victor reached the top of the stairs and walked along the antique T'capmin carpet runner, past the unfinished guest bedrooms, the nursery, the sewing room, the playroom, toward the closed door of the smallest room in his vast and heavily mortgaged mansion.

'VICTOR!'

There was no music in this, merely the whiplash pull on the leash, the insistent command of a vengeful master contemplating a mute and recalcitrant slave. Sharp. Belligerent. Victor reached the door, opened it and stepped inside the small room, brilliantly illuminated by the morning sun.

'VICTOR REID, YOU ARE THE MOST SELFISH MAN I'VE EVER MET! YOU . . .'

He closed the door and the sound became muffled, the words blurred and indistinct. The tone, however . . . the tone carried eloquently. Bad Victor. Shame on you, Victor.

He pulled the chair back from his desk and sat down. He dropped the opened copy of the literary journal onto the writing surface. It landed at an angle complementary to his notebook, a notebook that he had opened eight (nine? ten?) months before. 'Ascension part seven . . . opening . . . ' was inscribed at the top of the first page. The rest of the page, the rest of the notebook, was empty. His eyes strayed, involuntarily, to the familiar helvetica typeface

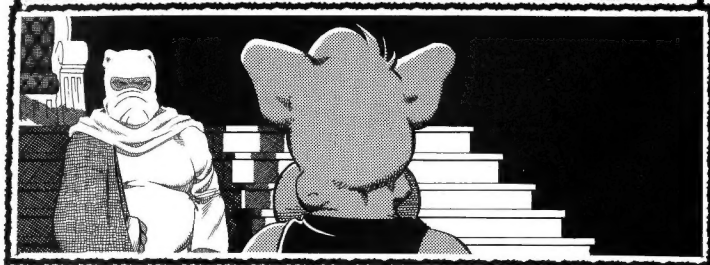
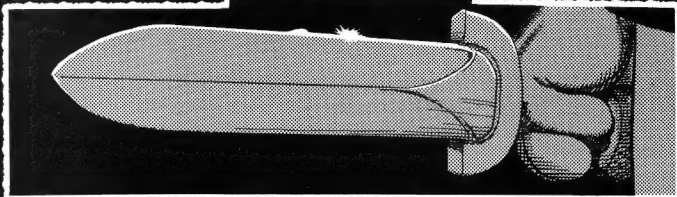
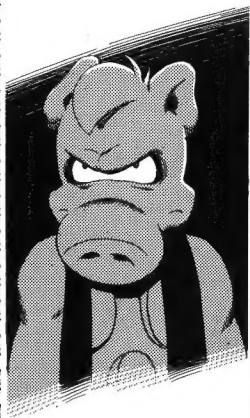
of the *Reads Informer's* letters section. It was the third time he had read the same paragraph. He knew, with a dreadful certainty, that it would not be the last.

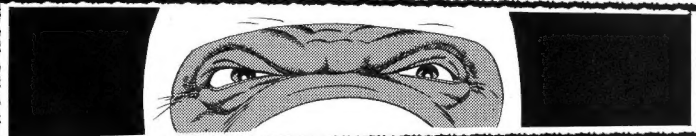
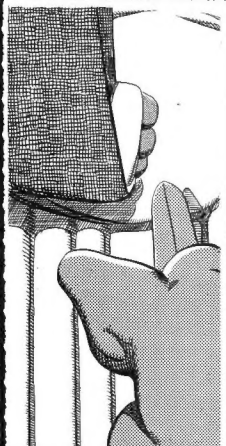
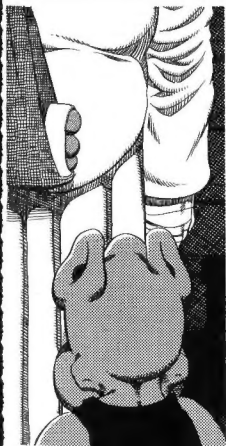
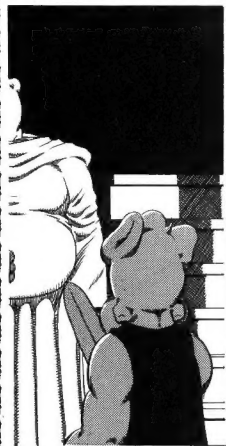
'Reid, of course, is simply the most recent example of a pattern which stretches back through the entire history of the Arts. One remembers him fondly, as a young lion of the printed page, drinking deeply at the well of divine inspiration, growing, molding himself and his work into something quite extraordinary and quite original. How sad to contemplate his descent from that pinnacle, that lofty perch which is achieved by so few, that summit from which a mature and focussed talent speaks forth, alternately reverencing, indicting and intriguing the gods themselves. How sad to contemplate his current degraded circumstance as a fashionable literary 'name', his infrequent and unworthy current works, mere raw material for the copperbit playhouses and the sordid appetites of their patrons: Vertigo Horse's shabby little money tree. But this sadness must be as nothing when measured against that of the muse or muses who informed his earlier works. 'Choose me,' cries the would-be artist in the blush of youth, fervently petitioning one or more of these Great Ladies for the golden gift that naught but they can bestow. 'Choose me and my life will be devoted to my art alone. I will forsake all things and all people if you will only give me that glorious seed, beside which all else is sham and dross and nonsense.'

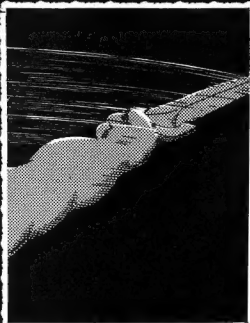
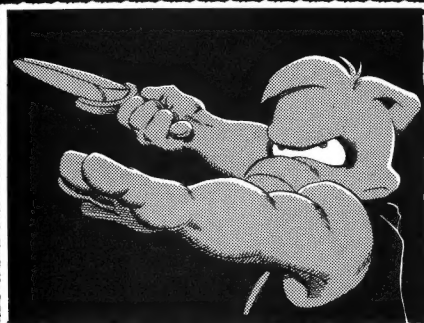
The ensuing paragraph was obscured entirely by the greenish-white smear of liquefied vegetables and his daughter's mucus. Victor trembled. Soon it would be time for him to return to the kitchen where (he knew) he and Sarah would argue. From the other side of the house, his daughter's crying rose, octave upon octave, swelling, soaring, compounding his crime, sealing his indictment, prefacing his sentence. He looked at his open notebook and thought, ruefully, about the nature of abandoned children. Sarah's rage and his daughter's misery filled his world, surrounding him, engulfing him, crushing him. He would have to go down and face the music, the song of aggrieved defiance which was but a single movement in the symphony of cold resentment: the sum of his life, the substance of his future. He would go down, yes. But not now. Not yet.

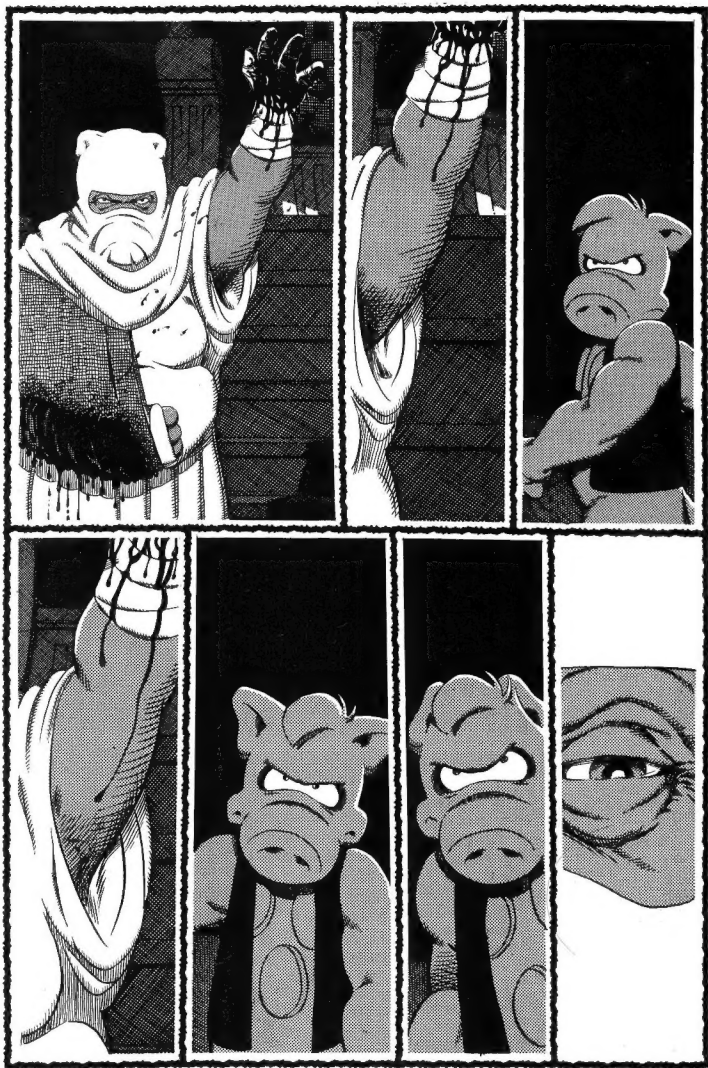
Victor pulled open the bottom drawer and withdrew a small bottle of cognac, and poured a large measure of it into a plain glass.

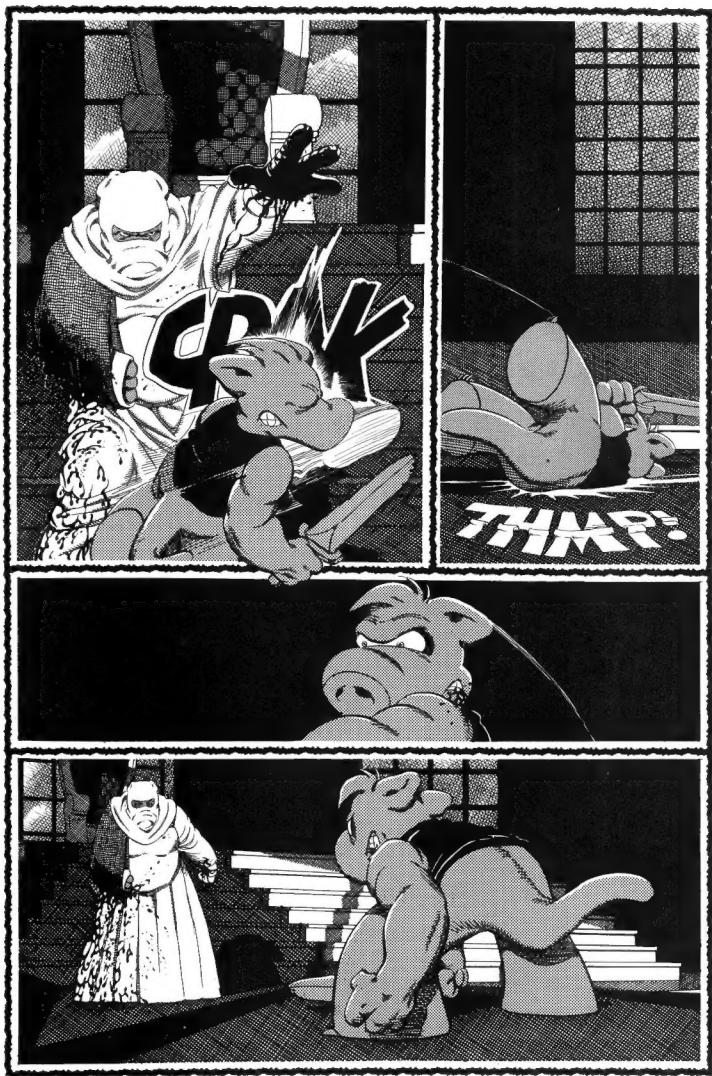












"CHAPTER ONE
THOUSAND AND ELEVEN
ARTSY-FARTSY HEADINGS
SNUFF REVEALED A MYSTERY
A PLEA A LARGER TYPEFACE
SEVERAL SKIPPED PARAGRAPHS
A REVELATION"

"**SNUFF**
WAS, IN REALITY,
HER SUPERKICK...
BUNKY THE ALBINO...
FROM HERD DAYS
AS CAPTAIN
COCHRAN"

"BUNKY HAD BECOME
CREADALINO WITH
NO GOOD EXPLANATION
EVEN IN THE BIG BOOK'S
APPENDIX. NOTHING, ZIP
NADA, LIKEWISE WITH
BUNKY'S INDESTRUCTIBLE
ESCAPES AND RE-
APPEARANCES"

"BUNKY WAS ACTUALLY
ELROD OF MELVINBONE,
BUT IN THE BIG BOOK'S ATLAS
THERE WERE NO MELVINBONE...
NOT EVEN ON THE PINKY
INSET MAPS WITH ALL
THE STREET NAMES!"

"ELROD CLAIMED TO
BE THE LAST RULER OF
A DYING RACE. WHY WERE
THERE NO OTHER MELVIN-
BONES OR MELVINBONYOIDS
(OR WHATEVER YOU WOULD
CALL THEM) IN THE
BIG BOOKS?"

"FROM SOMEWHERE BELOW HER
KAY SARAH SARAH
COULD HEAR ELROD OF
MELVINBONE SHOUTING--
PLEADING!"

"STOP--AH SAY
STOP, SON--DON'T
TURN THAT
PAGE!"

"TO NO AVAIL! THIS
WAS AN EXCITING PART!
KAY SARAH SARAH
COULD TELL! THERE WERE
MANY EXCLAMATION
POINTS! SHORT CHOPPY
SENTENCES! A LARGER
TYPEFACE!"

"**KAY SARAH SARAH**
COULDN'T WAIT. HER
BOSOM HEAVING, SHE
SKIPPED SEVERAL
PARAGRAPHS OF
PREAMBLE! SHE
WENT STRAIGHT
TO THE PUNCH-
LINE!!"

OF
OF

"ELROD WAS AN
ILLUSION, CREATED BY
CEREBUS' PROXIMITY
TO THE CHAOS BEIN'"

"AND WAS
KEPT ALIVE
ONLY BY HIS
BELIEF IN
HIS OWN
EXISTENCE"

"LALALA!
SAID THE
NON-EXISTENT
ALBINO WITH
HIS FINGERS
IN HIS EARS"

"LALALA
I CAN'T
HEAR A...!"

"BUT"

"UNFORTUNATELY"

"WE
COULD"

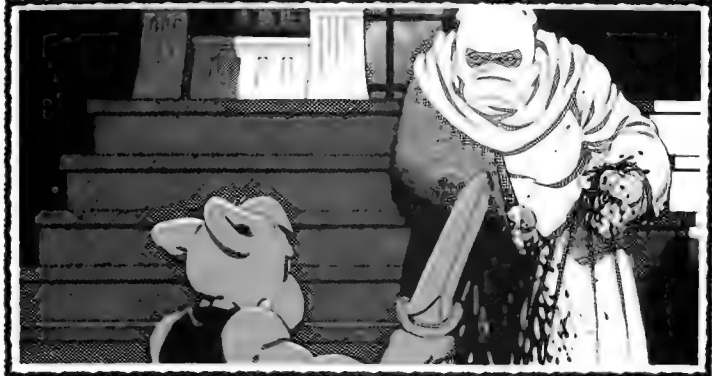
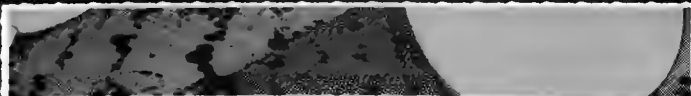
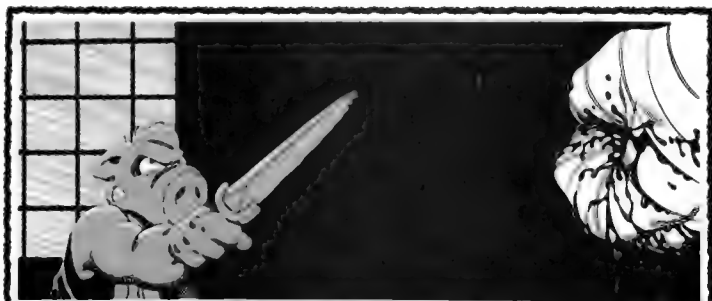
POIT!

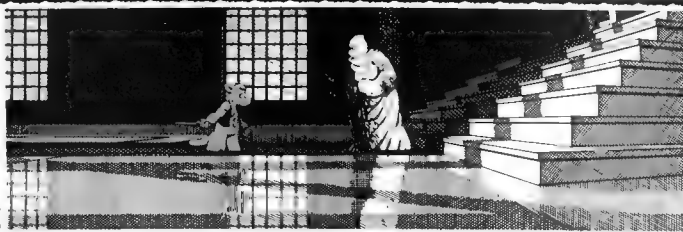
"BUMMER!"

"THOUGHT
KAY
~~SARAH~~
SARAH!"

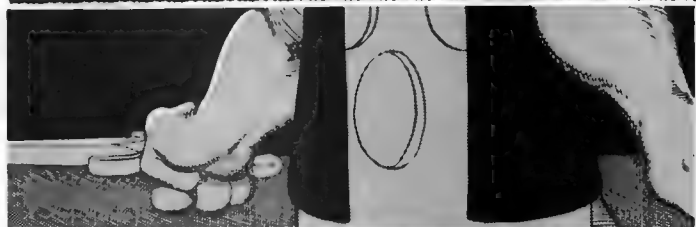
"FOR ELROD
HAD BEEN HER
THIRD FAVORITE
CEREBUS CHARACTER
AFTER JAKA AND
LORD JULIUS..."

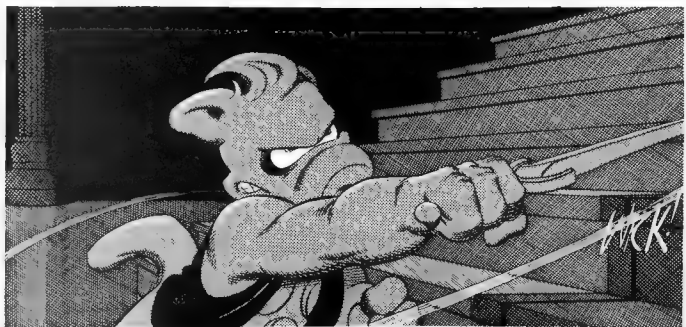


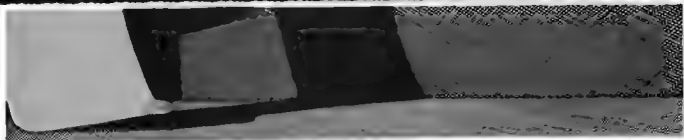
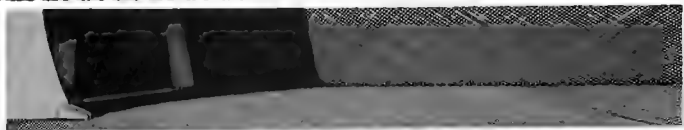


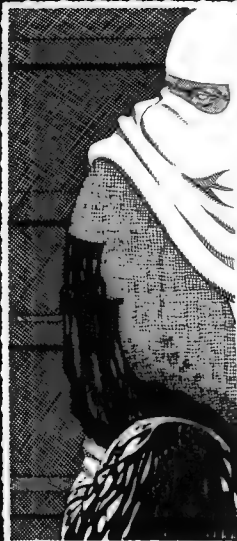
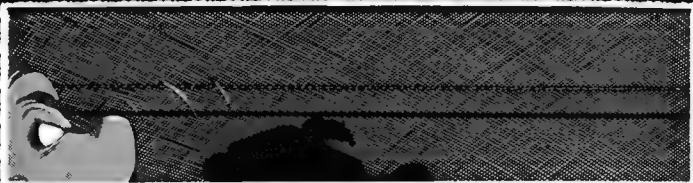
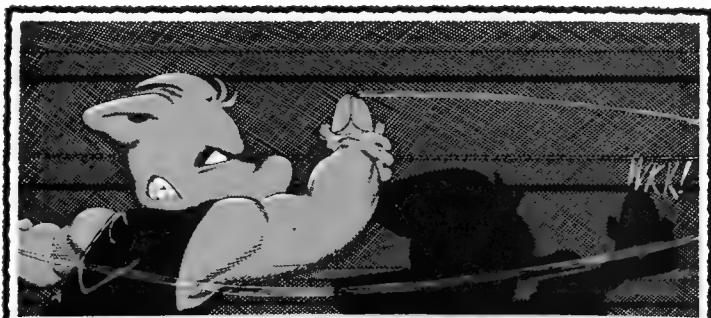


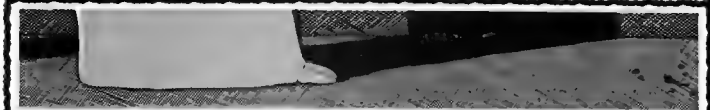
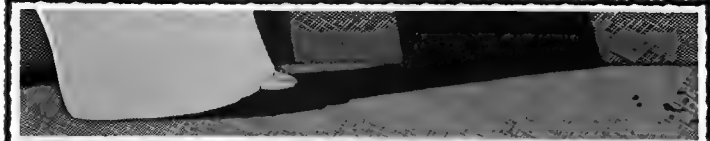
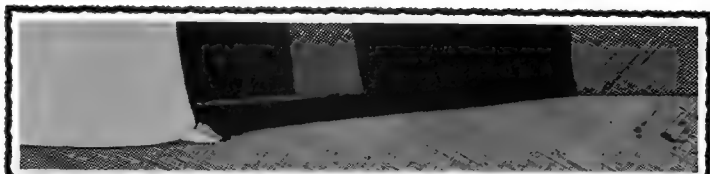


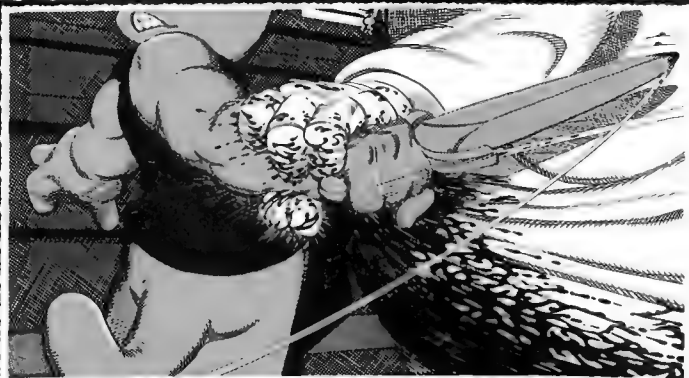












AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave,

Do you ever still, despite the level you have reached as a writer, sit back occasionally over something you've just written and say, "Wow! Did I really write that?"

It's so good, maybe, you almost can't believe *anybody* wrote it, it seems dictated by inspiration, clean off like coming out of a dream and putting it all down. In fact, of course, it wasn't that easy — nor was it, usually, when you run into that feeling in someone else's work. To paraphrase Dolly Parton, who said, "It takes a lot of money to look this cheap," with good writing (or anything else, really), it often takes a lot of work to make it look easy.

I *think* I just wrote my first really, really good short story. Not just good enough to maybe publish (if I'm lucky), but too good not to publish. Wish me luck.

Even if I'm wrong, I know that I've just hit a new plateau. Maybe writers have lots of bad stories in them, just as you say artists have bad drawings, and I had to get enough of them out before I could do a good one.

Sorry I haven't written for a while, by the way. Oh, before I forget: Did you really set up Po's chess mistake? I suspect you did, because the Roach, of all people, gives it correctly before it happens (wrongly), lost in the babble of nonsense constantly spewing out of him. I only just caught it in a reread.

Well done, Dave. And here I thought you'd messed up and tried to cover it.

Oh, I'm not *supposed* to talk about the comic book? Especially not about things that happened last year?

OK.

Jerry Lane did a delightful Marx Brothers piece (with Harpo, but not Zeppo) called "A Night at

Motel 6" back in 1973 for an underground called *Middle Class Fantasies* #1. I had never heard of it until recently, and I don't know if there was ever a #2, or who Jerry Lane is or was. I don't imagine most of your readers will ever see a copy of this obscure classic, and I hope you print this so I can drive them all nuts.

If you ever come across it, you might check it out. If you read it at 17, or even later, and it influenced you, I'd like to hear about it, but I doubt it. It's more like the movies, using mostly real Groucho lines and one stolen from Dorothy Parker that fits perfectly ("You can lead a horticulture, but you can't make her think."). His Groucho is limited to the Groucho of the movies, while Lord Julius has been allowed to really run a country the way Groucho ruled a Freedonia that could only have existed in a Marx Brothers movie. (Of course, Palnu exists only in *Cerebus*, but that's the point: Lord Julius, whatever his origins, is now forever yours.)

Anyway, it's fun and it's well done. What more could you ask for?

Now that I have (I hope) instilled an obsession in a small but significant number of people, causing them to hunt comic shops obsessively (you said that) in obsessive lust for this obscure (you said that) *objet d'art*, I'd like to turn your attention to *Publishers Weekly* magazine for October 11, 1993 (check your local library). Inside is a 7-page comic by Scott McCloud called "Comics and the Visual Revolution" that is not, as I first thought, an introduction and some excerpts from his wonderful book, but a new piece summarizing some of the arguments from the book but going on to say things of its own. Find it, read it. It's great.

It's followed by a list of comics books (my own term — books that

are comics that are not "comic books": *Cerebus* is a comic book, *Church & State* is a comics book; there is also a comics book called *Cerebus*, but I always tack on the *Barbarian* in my head when I think of that first volume). The list, unfortunately, contains no mention of the name Dave Sim (unfortunate for them — wait'll you see the letter they're getting!), but is otherwise pretty good.

Then, McCloud's cogent, reasonable, even inescapable arguments and this list of wonderful adult reading in comics form is followed by a full-page ad from DC featuring the new Fabioman — I mean Superman — I mean Jesus Christ (He is Risen from the Dead! Hosanna!), and big, bold letters:

"Buy the Power of Comics!"

"Millions of Boys 7-17"

I've already written Neil Gaiman asking him to tell his employers "thank you" for me.

Live long and prosper,

J. Stephen Bolhafner

3420 Missouri
St. Louis, MO
USA 63118

I'm sure Neil has that right at the top of his list of priorities, Steve ('things to do . . . phone Jenette and thank her for ghettoization ad in *Publishers Weekly* . . . for Steve').

★★★★★★★★★

Dave —

In the interests of error-free repackaging, and also because I can be an annoying fellow, I will take the liberty of drawing your attention to two typos in issue 176, to afford you the option of correcting them before the phonebook is unleashed upon unsuspecting bibliophiles everywhere.

On page 8, I believe Victor was on the receiving end of "many a frosty stare," rather than "share," as printed. And on page 12, I submit that Victor "proffered no explanation" to Milieu, not "preferred." (Undoubtedly, he preferred not to proffer it, but let's not get carried away.)

Also, I smiled the insider's knowing smile at Victor's line about all his "misplaced semi-colons and hyphens" — a trait you, quite coincidentally, I'm sure, share.

Or is that "stare"?

Suddenly questioning all his assumptions,

David "Stickler for Details" Allen
7 Howard St., Apt. 5
Petaluma, CA
USA 94952

In defense of Milieu (or Milou if you prefer), she corrected the original typed version. The errors were made in the typesetting stage. When she saw them in the printed version, her scream was audible for several blocks. I send her the typeset version instead now.

Dear Dave,

Say: those little rectangular cover pictures with titles on sure would make a great series of trading cards...

AAAUUUUGH!!!

Sorry... temporary insanity. And now, back (for the first time) to my real point, which is:

Reading Bruce Sterling's 'Hacker Crackdown' has gotten me to thinking, proving that, yes, there is a first time for everything. Specifically, it has gotten me to thinking about why so many people avidly await the monthly coming of a certain small grey fellow with a big nose and no discernible genitalia and, moreover, why we're all so eager to pour out our lives on the letters page.

Not to be outdone in the only-tangentially-relevant-quotations department, let me offer Sterling's words of insight:

"The words 'community' and 'communication' have the same root. Wherever you put a communications network, you put a community."

Bingo. Seems obvious now, eh. Community. Which is why it's a bit surprising that *Cerebus* is the only comic book with such a fine letters page and an interesting assortment of oddball letterhacks. (I may be being unfair — I admit that I haven't checked the letters pages of every indy or underground.) Obviously, *X-Men* doesn't have this kind of letters page, since Marvel will only print brown-nosing, but it is surprising that NONE of the other fine comics I read — *Bone*, *Elfquest*, *Miracleman* (too pretentious, way too pretentious), *JBNM* & *Spawn* — offers any kind of comparison. Don't get me wrong, these are all great comics (well, *Spawn*'s at least a 'good' comic...) but their

letters pages don't pass muster.

So what is it about *Cerebus* that makes it so fan-engrossing and copacetic? (Is that word right in this context? It just popped into my head and I can't be bothered checking a dictionary...) My theories are:

- 1) *Cerebus* is just the kind of comic that encourages and attracts weirdos.
- 2) All comics attract this kind of mail, it's just that the Pinis and co. are too polite to print it.
- 3) You're making it all up for our amusement... à la 1963.
- 4) You actively encourage us by printing all the fun stuff and you enjoy watching your community grow. Q.V. Rob & Avril.

So: own up, which is it? It sure beats da heck outta me.

Well, gotta skip out now... Thanks for printing the Aardvark song and a big thanks to my good friends Tom and Ross who got down on their knees and pled for it at the Edinburgh tour stop. But y'know, Dave, you really shouldn't do that, you'll just encourage me...

Bug you again in — 30!

Robert HD Ahrens
1915 Martha's Road
Alexandria, Virginia
USA

P.S. Gerhard — cool bricks, man.

I print the letters that interest me. I think that human beings being human beings are when they are the most interesting. I think it odd that people call the Aardvark Comment correspondents 'weirdos'. I accept that that's the popular perception, so I go along with it for the most part, but it beats hell out of me that you guys are described that way — I mean, as opposed to what? The people who write in to *The Comics Journal*? Give me a break.

Dear Dave,

Perhaps it's gauche of me to ask this in the middle of all of your efforts to expand *Cerebus*'s readership, but does anyone else feel that *Mothers & Daughters* is the worst storyline that you've done? Am I the only one that feels that the writing has become steadily worse and worse? Are there other readers who feel that "Reads" is a real low point?

Dave, I told my local comic shop

to take *Cerebus* off my list (which now consists of only *Bone*, *Hepcats*, and *Sandman*) and I don't think I'm going to add it back anytime in the near future. Sorry. I wonder if there's perhaps something that I'm not getting, because I haven't seen a critical letter in Aardvark Comment in the past two and a half years. Or maybe other readers are getting bored, are no longer buying *Cerebus*, and have much better things to do than to tell you or other *Cerebus* readers about it. (Yes, I know, I'm admitting that I don't have anything better to do myself. So what.)

Sincerely,

Srinivasan Sethuraman
Physics Department
Jadwin Hall
Princeton University
Princeton, NJ
USA 08544

Well, actually, there's your letter (dated January 5) and the following one from Lon Levy (dated November 18). Apart from that the mail has been very, very favourable. Surprised the hell out of me, actually.

Dear Dave,

I've been with you and the aardvark since 1983 when a very dear friend convinced me to give this strange book named *Cerebus* a try. Since then, I have made a *Cerebus* reader out of my wife, who devoured my collected "telephone books" and is now a frustrated monthly reader like the rest of us. I think that this is my second letter to you.

So much for my "credentials."

At the risk of incurring "the Wrath of SIM" I must tell you that the most current issue of *Cerebus* as of this writing, #175 ("Reads"), is disappointingly self-indulgent.

After having arrived at a climactic turning point in the storyline the issue previous, this didactic, prose, thinly veiled allegory of one of your convention experiences, replete with mean-spirited descriptions of real industry personalities, interrupts and stops the flow of the narrative dead in its tracks. The small number of pages (five) in the back which return to the story do not progress the tale much farther than the previous issue.

The "roach" is fairly well integrated into your narrative, and

seems to have an actual role to play in the story in addition to his parodistic role as your strawman to criticize the industry. By comparison with this brilliant character, the vast majority of "Reads" is a boring tract which belongs in an interview or editorial column where the reader can choose to take it or leave it. It should not have been interjected into your work.

Instead of eliminating light-hearted, stand-alone comic interludes such as "Like-A-Looks," I would strongly recommend that you eliminate these pages from the next *Cerebus* collection.

Self-publishing is not **The ANSWER**, Dave; it is simply your answer. It is the choice which was right for you. Or do you truly feel that the flashy garbage being produced by Image is superior to such DC/Vertigo titles as *Sandman*, *Hellblazer*, and *Shade*?

It should come as no surprise that most creative people prefer to do just that: create; not deal with the multitude of mundane but necessary business and administrative concerns associated with the production of a comic book. The kind of necessary details you point out can be so draining and distracting in your most recent column in that same issue #175.

Still a fan of your work,

Lon Levy
RD3 Box 231B, Indian Creek Rd.
Troy, NY
USA 12180

Having arrived at the point where I don't have an editor or a publisher deciding what stays in and what comes out of my book (it only took, what, almost forty years for that to become possible in the comic-book field), do you really think that I'm going to let you decide what should stay in and what should come out? You've got a lot of nerve, if you don't mind my saying so (and even if you do).

★★★★★★★★

I bought my *Cerebus* #1 off of a small stack of them on a dealers' table at the 1977 World Science Fiction Convention in Miami. I've stayed with *Cerebus* ever since.

Rick Obermeyer
2124 Miscindry Place
Orlando, FL
USA 32806

Hey! That's one!

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

It was great finally meeting you at Mid-Ohio Con. Wanted to say, hey, thanks for the sketch and answering all of my carefully prepared questions (of course, I thought of a dozen more later on, like, where is Sir Gerrik these days, and wasn't he once referred to as Cirin's adopted son?).

So anyway, in my first letter (back in 156), I was being bitter about the narrow-mindedness of most people and the difficulty I was having in meeting intelligent, open-minded young women. Well, now I'm working at a law firm (instead of a gas station) and I'm not sure I see much wider possibilities.

See, I'm 26, and I feel like I'm just starting to learn about life. Anyone who thinks they have it all figured out and doesn't keep learning and experiencing new things might as well be dead. There are, in my mind, so many places to visit (Alaska, Europe, Australia) and ideas to play with and philosophies to learn about and sensations to discover that I honestly can't see ever being content with life. My current long-range goal is to get a graduate degree in psychology and do some kind of research into perception and "non-ordinary states of reality," i.e. religious transport, drug-induced states of consciousness, etc. God only knows if I'll manage that, but it's what I (think I) want to do.

Well, I've been quasi-successful at finding open-minded relationship prospects since then, so it's not quite the vast desert I painted two years ago. Enough possibilities to keep life interesting, but nothing major yet. And then there are those passing brief encounters that make you wonder . . .

OK, so, after leaving the con, we (my friend James and I) stopped at a store just north of Ohio State University called "Monkey's Retreat," which had turned into a very impressive store in the years since I attended OSU. They have all kinds of "fringe culture" books, magazines, and paraphernalia, and I could have spent hours browsing (and lots of money too, if I had any). I like to read and sift through a lot of new age/occult, philosophy, alternative viewpoint stuff, etc., looking more for overall patterns than details, and this place pretty well blows away anything Cincinnati has to offer as far as selection.

So I went up to the counter to

ask about this book I've been sort of looking for (*The High Times Encyclopedia of Recreational Psychedelics* — no, really) and there was this girl (young woman, if you prefer) working there. God, was she cute! She had dark hair, sort of shaved on the sides, glasses, and really bright, intelligent eyes. And she was really helpful and friendly and showed me where the drug books were, and she saw my *Cerebus* pin and asked if I'd seen you at the con, and we talked about *Cerebus* for a while (of course she was a *Cerebus* reader) and I said it was a shame that I'd spent all my money at the con because this store had a lot of neat stuff, like all the Timothy Leary and Robert Anton Wilson books, and it turned out that she was a Wilson fan too. I could have stayed for hours talking about all this stuff and basking in her smile. (I guess I'm sounding kinda dopey, sorry. You got "angry" from me the last two letters, now you get "dopey.") But James was getting restless, and who knows? Maybe she's just that nice and friendly and personable to everyone and the smile was just part of the job. Besides, do I need to try to meet someone who lives in another city?

And James sez, once we're in the car, "Did you get her name and phone number?" Well, no, I mean, do people really do that? Successfully, I mean? That quickly? I guess so, but I tried it once and it didn't work, I mean it failed to work spectacularly, and anyway see the last two sentences of the last paragraph.

But shit. If I lived in Columbus or the store were in Cincinnati, I'd at least go back and talk to her more. I don't know anyone else who likes Wilson, and who knows what else we may have had in common?

So.

The real point of this letter.

Uh, Dave. I know you just printed a letter from me recently, but would you do me a big, big favor and print this one too? Because it occurred to me that maybe; possibly, being a *Cerebus* fan, she might read this letter (or have it shown to her by someone who shops there — hint, hint) and maybe, possibly, she wouldn't be mortified to read it, and she might, conceivably, even take me up on an invitation to write to me . . .

It's a long shot, but doesn't it make great letters page?

Yrs,

Karl J. Hiller
1264 W. Galbraith Rd.
Cincinnati, OH
USA 45231-5538

P.S. Hello to Nancy Masse and Tony Seybert (yes, I am one slow-ass correspondent, sorry, letters are on the way)!

I can just see her really bright, intelligent eyes bugging out to here when she reads your letter, Karl.

★★★★★★★★

Dear *Cerebus* readers:

Dave has graciously allowed me some space in Aardvark Comment to let you know about comics scholarship and what you can do about it. I'm a doctoral student in American Studies at Michigan State University, specializing in comics (and don't worry I'm 'one of us,' having read comics for 20 years, and *Cerebus* since issue 50). Currently I'm involved in a few projects you might be interested in:

The Comic Arts Conference: The Third Annual CAC will be held on July 2, in conjunction with the Chicago Comicon. The CAC seeks to bring scholars and professionals together to discuss issues of comics scholarship, criticism, theory, and history. The first two CACs were held during the Expo in San Diego the last two years and featured Will Eisner, Scott McCloud, Steve Bissette, and others as respondents and presenters (you wouldn't recognize the academics' names). The call for papers has just been sent out (November 1993) and abstracts are due by April 1. Scholars, including those without institutional affiliation, and professionals, who wish to attend as presenters or respondents, are urged to write, as spots may still be open. Please write (or e-mail) for more information if you would like to attend, as a presenter or audience member.

The national meeting of the Popular Culture Association will be held in Chicago at the Palmer House hotel from April 6-9. Several panels on comics will be presented, including my own paper, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: the Effects of Academic Attention of Popular Art Forms," in which I examine the history of academic study of the novel, jazz, and film to see what lessons are offered for comics. On Friday April 8, Scott McCloud will be

presenting his slide show on "Understanding Comics." For more information on attending as a non-presenter (and be sure to mention that) write: PCA, Popular Culture Department, BGSU, Bowling Green, OH 43403.

In general I am seeking to make an academic career studying comics and in opening opportunities for others to do so. As a part of this effort I edit a newsletter entitled *Comic Art Studies*, from the Russel B. Nye Popular Culture Collection at Michigan State University. While my studies limit my time, I will gladly do what I can to help others who wish to do scholarly work on comics.

Comica Amica Nobicum (Comics Are Our Friends!)

Peter M. Coogan
Comic Art Studies
MSU Libraries
East Lansing, MI
USA 48824
Cooganpe@student.msu.edu
FAX: (517) 336-1448

To say the least, I am not a very big fan of putting comic books through the Academic Grinder. I'm printing this as a public service for all you scholastics out there. I think it was Steve Martin who said that writing about art was like dancing about architecture.

★★★★★★★★

Hi, Dave —

I just got back home after seeing you at Mid-Ohio Con in Columbus and thought I'd write a note. I really wanted to let you know that I appreciate your patience and generosity toward the people that read *Cerebus*. I was with a friend (Hi, Carey!) whom I had introduced to *Cerebus* by loaning her my phone book collection. She loved it (of course) and became a fan, starting her own collection with *Jaka's Story*. She then wanted to meet you after I told her what fun some other friends and I had seeing you and Gerhard in Indianapolis last year. She wanted a sketch of young Jaka in her now prized personal copy of *Jaka's Story*. So, when you announced your appearance at Mid-Ohio Con, we made plans to travel the three hours to see you. Columbus is my hometown anyway, and we planned our weekend trip around you and *Cerebus*. Now, I'm an avid comics collector, but I'm 34 years old and conventions generally bore me. Also, thanks to

you, I can now only see hundreds of "Pud Withers" walking around the dealers tables and it disturbs me. But, she wanted to see you and, frankly, so did I because I had recently acquired a gold *Cerebus* Zero which I could now get signed! (EEEEK . . . ! 34 years old and still a fanboy!)

Well, our plans for the weekend turned sour (like our stomachs) when we both got food poisoning on the night before the Con and were forced to stay up all night projectile vomiting until 6 o'clock the next morning. Needless to say, we didn't feel up to driving the three hours that day, so we regrouped and decided to shoot for Day Two of the convention. Sure, we missed your panel discussion and the auction and costume ball on Day One, but our quest was to meet you, which we were still able to do, so it was okay. I tell you this background info not to brag about what diehards we are, or to stroke your professional ego, but only to let you know that if you would have acted like another of the "stars" that we observed at the convention that day, it would have really sucked that we made the effort. But you didn't . . . and more about that in a second. Instead, you signed all of our books, were friendly, and even though you were probably exhausted from the party the night before, continued signing and smiling (even to the *Spawn* #10 boys) all day long. My friend Carey was so intrigued watching you render her young Jaka sketch that she sighed in appreciation. At that moment, you looked up and said to her, "That is the cutest noise I've heard! I'll keep drawing and see if I can get you to make that sound again." I think her toes curled, Dave!

Her sketch was great (so were mine) and you even jokingly told her that a "cute li'l blonde woman named Carey" would appear in issue #180! Well, she was thrilled. I was happy because I hadn't been wrong to tell her what a nice guy I had found you to be in Indy, and our battle to get there had been rewarded. Thanks to you.

Now, in contrast, let me talk about the aforementioned "star" seated on the opposite end of the table that same day. John Byrne. This guy had a fucking sign up in front of him that read:

"HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:

— 3 to 5 autographs ONLY;

— autographs on multiple copies

of the same issue are **\$1.00 EACH**;

- I will produce a sketch after approximately every 10th person in line, which will then be auctioned to the highest bidder. **BIDS START @ \$25.00.**"

Make no mistake; I think John Byrne is a talented artist, but if it had been fucking MICHELANGELO sitting there copping attitude like that with his fans, my initial reaction would still be a hearty "FUCK OFF artist-boy!" I'm sure he feels this is some sort of fair solution to some perceived problem that no other artist there that day seemed to be having (including P. Craig Russell, Jill Thompson, Martin Wagner, or you, Dave) but charging for AUTOGRAPHS? Dangling sketches like carrots to his fans and making them fight over these with their wallets? BLOW ME, JOHN BYRNE! *X-Men*, *Next Men* . . . wow, what comes after that? *Exit-Men?* *Nexus Men?* *Solar Plexus Men?* Who cares? Gullible kids that John Byrne can fleece, that's who! And he's wrong to do it. And you, Dave Sim, are supposed to be the industry's crusty curmudgeon? Not in my eyes.

Anyway, I just wanted to let you know that we had a fun weekend and maybe we'll see you again some tour. And, just in case you weren't being facetious, we'll watch for Carey's cameo appearance (with "The Beavers"?) in #180. And then we'll keep on reading *Cerebus* until . . . well, you know when. Thanks again.

Hal Brandt (& Carey Sprano)
618 Clermont Drive
Fort Wayne, Indiana
USA 46807

Well, to be fair, everyone has his own approach to signing autographs, doing sketches, not doing sketches, etc. A lot of guys see it as a necessary ordeal, others as a job perk, others (like me) actually enjoy it, others as a power trip or whatever. The only two people I've stood in line to get an autograph from were Jean Chrétien (when *Straight from the Heart* was released) and Elizabeth Manley (some perverse reason attached to researching *Mothers & Daughters* that I've forgotten). Chrétien (our new Prime Minister, for the non-Canadians out there) shook hands with everyone before signing and asked them their name for the dedication. I remember

thinking, "Ooo. That's good. That works, doesn't it?" So I've done it ever since.

And Carey really *did* make the cutest little noise.

★★★★★★★★

Sim,

Very early one morning, while my friends and I were enjoying a fine game of Diamondback, the topic of conversation (if one can call it that) fell upon the finer things in life, women and comics.

J.B. began the discussion by reminiscing on his past failures.

"You know, guys, the whole relationship was going fine until I made her read those damn comic books."

"Comics couldn't have been the problem," McLongfield added.

"Of course not, comics aren't the problem. I just don't think comics and women go together."

"What are you saying, J.B.? Comics wouldn't be the same without those well-formed heroines."

"No, you idiot, I mean women don't enjoy reading comics."

Then I asked, "So you have never met a woman who enjoyed reading comics?"

"Well . . . of course. I mean, you see women at the conventions and occasionally at the store, but in general women and comics don't mix. Come on, haven't you guys ever given a comic to one of your girlfriends?"

"Well . . . uh . . . sure." We all knew that McLongfield was lying. He hasn't spoken to a girl since the second grade.

I responded in the positive.

"Yeah . . . that's happened to me. But is it the women or the comics? I mean, why do women not like comics?"

"I just think they hate going to the comic store with me."

"No, the last girl I gave a comic to made some snide remark about the art ruining the stories." I could already anticipate McLongfield's response.

"What do you mean!?! The art defines a comic!"

(It was at this point that I noticed I had been dealt a Magician and a Priestess, so I wasn't paying too much attention to what J.B. was saying.)

" . . . with great art but no story would suck. You have to have

both a good story and good art; the two work together."

"Well, the women I've talked to said they liked the story, and also that the art wasn't bad; they just didn't like the fact that the art didn't let them use their imagination."

"What do you mean? Comics are full of using your imagination. It's called closing or something like that."

"Closure," J.B. said, correcting McLongfield.

"Yeah, I know. I told them the same thing but they still said that the comics infringed on their imagination."

"Infringed?"

"Yeah, infringed. They felt like the comics dictated what the characters looked like and they would rather create the scene in their head. They felt like the characters weren't theirs because they were depicted on the page."

"But the characters aren't theirs," J.B. interjected.

"Yeah," McLongfield said, "J.B.'s right. The characters belong to the artists and writers, not to the reader."

"Don't you listen to Dave," said J.B. (Once again trying to start an argument.) "Most characters in comics are owned by the comic companies, not the artists."

"Look, guys," I said, fed up with the argument and with the lousy Priest-Priest hand I had been dealt, "The point is that they felt like comics took away an aspect of the characters. In novels, you can read a description of a character and form your own image. Every person who reads, say, *Wuthering Heights*, will have a different image in their head of what Heathcliff looks like. Though basically everyone's image of Heathcliff will be the same, each person's image will differ slightly."

"Heathcliff? But that IS a comic."

"Shut up, McLongfield."

"Listen. The point is, comics take away from a reader's personal interpretation of the scenes and characters in a story."

"So what, you're going to stop collecting comics?"

"Yeah, you gonna let some woman talk you out of comics?"

"No, that's not the point. The visual imagery of comics defines comics as an art form. Comics are juxtaposed pictorial and other

images in deliberate sequence." "

"Didn't I read that somewhere?"

"Even though the art takes away from the reader's imaginary vision of a character, the art adds to the storytelling ability of the author. Priestess-King, I win."

With that, J.B. and McLongfield handed me the last of their cash. So basically, Dave, I just wanted to write and say thanks for the forty bucks.

The now richer,

S. McNimbus
Cate Center, Box 4909
Norman, OK
USA 73026 .

P.S. Is it too late to pick up another Diamondback deck since the three of us were playing with only one set of cards? (I know Cerebus would shove the cards down our throats for even suggesting such a feat.) Also, I heard that DC is releasing a Sandman trading card set. How cold would Hell have to be before you came out with a Cerebus trading card series? Have you ever read Dante?

Another deck is on its way. Hell, let's make it two.

I think the kinds of chicks you're talking about are the ones who always have to picture themselves as the heroine. Try reading a romance novel sometime. Scary shit. Very scary shit.

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

While rereading old issues of *Cerebus*, I once again came across the question of whether or not to shave one's pubic hair. So just in case you are interested in a woman's opinion on that matter — here's what I wanted to say:

Pubic hair is the most wonderful thing! I just can't understand why anybody should think a woman's body is better without it.

Isn't it great to play with all those little curls, to comb them with your hands and wrap them around each finger? There are so many things to do with pubic hair — hey, guys, use your imagination!

In my opinion cutting it off is the most boring and unimaginative way to treat it.

Just think of all the excitement you can get when carefully parting that layer of thick, soft curls and slowly revealing what lies underneath. And there you are:

discovering a woman's vagina, joyfully unwrapping it like a X-mas present (and let's face it: what would a present be without the proper wrapping? Isn't opening a gift box to see what is hidden in there one of the most exciting things?).

What you are experiencing is an adventurous journey into the most private and secret parts of a female body. Isn't it wonderful to discover all those hidden places for yourself? It's unique and special.

You wouldn't want to have it all laid out for you, would you?

No pubic hair, probably some spotlights and a sign saying "Enter here". Just the thought of it is enough to make me want to turn my back on sex. Come on, all you guys who think that hairless vaginas are neat — where's your sense of excitement and adventure?

I wasn't born with this strong love for my pubic hair. I never thought all that much about it, to tell you the truth. I only realized what a wonderful thing it was when I removed it to please my boyfriend. Actually I thought it wouldn't make any difference for me and why shouldn't I do him a small favour. But it does, it really does make a hell of a difference.

My pubic hair is part of my body, of my personality and identity.

I truly miss it and feel sort of alone and incomplete without it.

Luckily it is starting to grow again and I can hardly wait for the moment it will be back to its original length and beauty.

I'll gratefully run my fingers through it and promise myself never to part from it again.

I guess this just needed to be said for once and for all.

All my love,
Nicole Kolisch
Kardinal Nagl Platz,
1030 Vienna
Austria

P.S. Just while we're on the subject: One of the most exciting moments in the theatre is when the curtain starts to rise. Wouldn't be quite the same without any curtain. I'm an actress — I know what I'm talking about.

P.P.S. It was great to see you in London, Dave. I thought you were wonderfully sweet and kind (and very patient) and therefore proved everyone wrong who ever wrote in to tell you you're an asshole.

I've shaved a couple of 'em in my day. First of all it means that they really trust you if they let you get close to the southern regions with a sharp instrument. The other thing is it's funny watching them try not to scratch themselves in public the next day.

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Okay, *okay* — here's my postcard. But I didn't start reading your book *between* issues 1 and 6; in fact, I'm rather proud to say that I've been with you from the start, and have been reading *Cerebus* since the very first issue, as you know — and will continue to enjoy your work, whatever form it takes, long past issue #300. Assuming, of course, that wine and cigarettes don't get to me first. (But then, what a way to go, eh?)

Your fan,
Diana Schutz
Portland, OR

Hey! That's *two!* (Don't I know you from somewhere, lady?)

★★★★★★★★

Dear Mr. Sim & Gerhard:

I started with #1 in spring 1978, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. I paid 10¢.

Happy Holidays.

Andrew Watson
3030 Buchberger
Wisconsin Rapids, WI
USA 54494

Hey! That's *three!* (Ten cents?)

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Well, I must first give you the obligatory compliments on your wonderful book, created along with the excellent talents of Ger. I must recommend that he publish a coffee table book which displays his unique quality.

I also find myself compelled to tell you that I am sorry for any typos and correction marks. But now that I have gotten that out of the way, I think I will move on to what I really am writing about.

What the hell is going on? For the past few issues no one has written any depressing "life sucks and so does love" letters. I mean, come on, no one has detonated some happy bomb which got rid of all the pain and suffering out there.

As much fun as *Cerebus* is, 4 pages of praise for anything tends

to get a little boring. Especially month after month after month. I find myself skimming Aardvark Comment, and I don't like that. I fondly remember the good old days when people talked about things like masturbation, what were the greatest bands, and, even better, I loved the soap opera letters: who liked who, who was devastated, who felt like life was totally without meaning without their significant other around. Those are the letters that allowed me to feel a true kinship with other *Cerebus* readers.

I felt as if I could finally believe that at least some people knew the kinds of things I've felt. Unrequited love? Been there. Suicidal? Tried that. Highs and lows like some twisted and sadistic roller coaster? Yep, I know what ya mean.

Where's Cassandra? M'Oak? I only started reading a little over a year ago, and now I find myself pining for the good old days of *Melmoth* when the letters page could easily run ten pages.

So come on. Break out those handkerchiefs, and dust off those broken hearts. It's time to get sad!

I guess I should try to help, but that could be kind of hard, considering I just got a girlfriend last night. But then again, I'm going into this knowing full well that in three months I'm going to hate her.

I met her through a friend I met at Outdoor School. Her name is Megan, and she is one of the prettiest girls I have ever seen. We were watching some cheesy movie when I felt the vibes flow correctly, and half an hour later I come up for air. She is the closest thing to perfection I have ever seen. And by the time this school year ends, she will hate me.

Why do we do this to ourselves? Why endure something that will in all likelihood end up in pain and suffering on both our parts?? Why set ourselves up for disappointment?

It all comes down to love. Whether we are looking for it, or envision ourselves actually in love, we are willing to risk it all for a little bit of love. Without it, why bother going through the motions?

I do think I love her, but that is always how these things start. And we all know how they end. And that hurts.

Sincerely,
Zobnek

**Jeez, you're asking the wrong guy.
The motions I think are great.
Love, itself, sucks big-time.
Personal opinion.**

★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

I've never written to Aardvark Comment before, but there's a first time for everything, right? Please humor me if I ramble a bit.

I've considered writing before, mind you. I'm not one of those readers who's been around since the beginning (although I'm interested in the count, too, now that you've asked 'em to step forward), but it has been a good long time now: I dipped my toes into the water sometime back in the mid-fifties, and finally took the plunge into regular readership 'round about #80. In the ensuing eight years (eek!) there have been several story developments that deserved comment but didn't get it, not to mention one or two interesting life crises that seemed at the time to be apropos, even important. Somehow, though, I never got around to it.

You've even asked me if I've written in before, as a matter of fact: when I met you in Chicago last summer and mentioned how glad I was to finally do so, since I'd been in Cleveland on your previous Chicago visit, and in Chicago when your Tour hit Cleveland, you mentioned a letter from someone else with a similar complaint. (The feeling came back when I read Morten Eriksen's letter about missing you in Aberdeen . . . and also when I saw that on the first Thanksgiving in 20 years that I didn't spend in Columbus, Ohio, not only had the Mid-Ohio Con moved there, but you were attending!)

All of which illustrates how much in demand you are these days, so I guess I'm lucky that I did get my *Swords* #1 signed by you in Chicago; thanks. (Without a head sketch, though — I suppose you're right that "something's got to give," but it seems a shame. I'm also the guy who found you in Artists Alley and told you about the signing you'd been scheduled for 45 minutes earlier, and the huge line waiting patiently for your presence. Crowds and demands or no, the autographing

system sucked this year: with only one ticket per day, stormtroopers guarding the rooms, and ad-hoc scheduling, it was a disservice to both us fans and you pros, and I hope they fix it next year.)

See, I told you I'd ramble! But anyway . . . I just finished reading #175 and 176 in one sitting, the first two chapters of *Reads*, and I finally decided to write. At first glance, all the dense prose looked intimidating for a "comic book," but once I started into it, it flowed beautifully — indeed, much better than the prose passages in *Jaka's Story* and *Melmoth*. I was captivated. Number 175 hooked me with Victor Reid's story alone, but #176 floored me with the sophisticated things you're doing with that story. You're telling us the tale of a character that is, at the same time, both your own story and a variation of the story *he'll* be telling us — and you set all this up in advance, with perfect clarity, *within* the story, so as to offer commentary on your own work even before we've seen it! Hell, it's so complicated it's hard for me to describe, yet it's perfectly comprehensible. And as you deftly weave in and out of these self-reflective layers, you also use the story to offer perspectives on yourself, the comics industry, the sociopolitical world at large, and the background of your own fictional milieu!

(Speaking of "Milieu," the proofreading isn't entirely without flaw; for example, I suspect that Victor *proffered* no explanation, not "preferred.")

And speaking of milieu in the *other* sense; the second half of the book, with the standoff between the three characters with zip-a-tone skin, has me on the edge of my seat, too!

You've set a new high-water mark for yourself, Dave, and it looks like you'll just keep getting better.

Best regards,

Chris J. Miller
3633 North Leavitt Street #2
Chicago, Illinois
USA 60618

P.S.: I'm fascinated by the innovative (and forthright) approach to marketing you've taken throughout Campaign '93, and I'm glad to see it's been a success. As an attorney, I know that many people greedily take advantage of every nook and cranny of intellectual property law, often for no other reason than that

the law exists, so it's refreshing to see your more open, cooperative approach to dealing with retailers, fans, and other creators. You're on the cutting edge here, Dave: as the flood of information in this society continues to grow — particularly in new, high-tech media — the competing tradition calling for the free spread of that information is going to come into more and more open conflict with such laws, and I think that more often than not, out of necessity, it's going to prevail.

Well, speaking as not-an-attorney, I'm glad you think my arguments have merit. I really have no idea what society is going to look like once we begin to dismantle the basic principles of English

Common Law dating back to the Magna Carta, but I think devoting nearly a thousand years to that particular hallucination is more than enough.

★★★★★★★★

Dave,

Count me as one who started with issue #1 — straight off the rack in '77(?). #101 came out the month I opened in '87, so I can remember how many months I've been open by your latest issue number.

John Judge, Rivercity Comics
Clinton, IA

Hey! That's *four!* (Rivercity Comics comes highly recommended, by the way).

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1-11, 13, 15-21, 23, 25-30

BI-WEEKLIES reprint Notes from the Publisher, Notes from the President, Aardvark Comment and the individual issues' covers.

CEREBUS BI-WEEKLY reprinted CEREBUS 1-25.

HIGH SOCIETY BI-WEEKLY reprinted CEREBUS 26-50.

CHURCH & STATE BI-WEEKLY reprinted CEREBUS 51-80.

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Baltimore Convention Center

JULY 29-31
DALLAS, TX
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Dallas Market Hall

ROARIN' RICK'S RARE BIT FIENDS

A CEREBUS PREVIEW

Rick Veitch has a dream. Or, rather, Rick Veitch has many dreams. He began writing them down and drawing them some time ago just for his own amusement. Then he started sending around photocopied collections to a few of his friends. Then he started running a few of them as a back-up feature in *Maximortal* (on the surface of it, a reworking of the Superman mythos incorporating a thinly veiled portrait of comic-book history, the book is actually a phenomenal and intricately woven 'last word' on the subject of power and super-power). Then he started toying with the idea of self-publishing (Self-publishing? Sniff sniff? Did someone say 'self-publishing?') them, which is where I came in ... at this year's Chicago Comicon.

He calls his strip/dreams *Rare Bit Fiends* (with apologies, of course, to Winsor McCay). I am such an enthusiast about the whole idea of what Rick is trying to do that I volunteered to do a 'guest dream' in his first issue, IF he was serious about self-publishing. He assured me that he was, so I waited for a really good dream to come along (which it did in late October of last year). The result was a four page strip/dream entitled 'Zelda Café', which will be in the first issue of *Rare Bit Fiends*, which will be out this summer. Rick already has more guest dreams promised for future issues by the likes of Neil Gaiman and Dave Gibbons.

If I was an enthusiast about the *idea*, I am a *fanatic* about the finished work (as of this writing, most of two issues). As a direct result, I have offered Rick as much space as he wants in this, and the next two issues of *Cerebus*, to give you all a taste of what (I am sure) will be the self-publishing bit of 1994. I'm getting Rick to put me down for a hundred copies of the first issue so I can give them away to friends and family (it was such a *trip* to illustrate one of my own dreams that I've been urging every professional I know to give it a try and send the results to Roarin' Rick).

The Roarin' One also intends to conduct a Dream Forum in each issue, featuring readers' dreams, analysis and debate on dreams, which will probably make Aardvark Comment seem positively sane by comparison.

The back cover this issue is Rick's wonderful parody of the Albert Dorne 'We're Looking for People Who Like to Draw' ad from issue 5 of 1963

Next issue (or perhaps in 182) I hope to have details on ordering single copies and subscriptions. For now, you can send your dreams to Rick Veitch c/o KING HELL PRESS, P.O. Box 1731, West Townshend, Vermont, 05359.

Here's your first Rare Bit, Fiends.



SHE DWELLS UP IN
THE MOUNTAINS.



NOT ALONE
IT SEEMS.



AND LIKES TO FEED
ON NATIVES.



WHO CALL HER...

RARE BIT FIENDS

SHE'LL COME DOWN
ON SAINT VITUS' DAY,
JUST TO HEAR THE
SCREAMS.

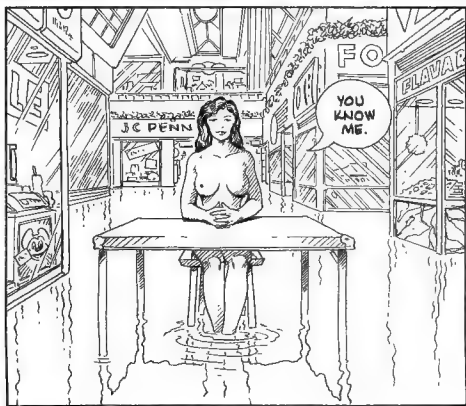
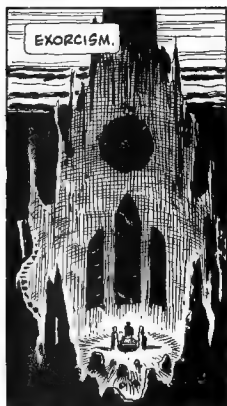
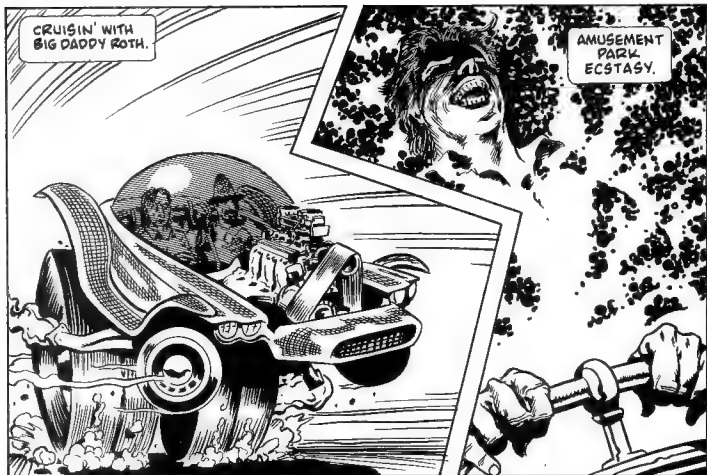
PURRIN' WHILE
SHE MAULS YA'...



"RELAX. I'M JUST
A DREAM!"







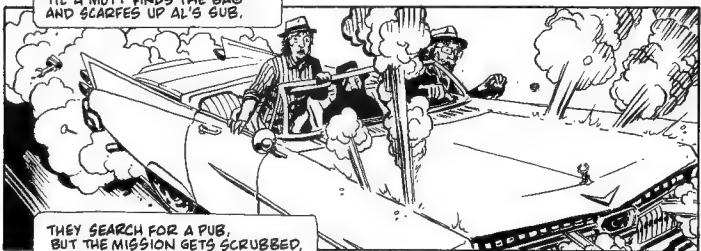
RUB-A-DUB-DUB,
THREE MEN IN A TUB.
DISCOVERED A HARBOR
AND ROWED FOR THE HUB.



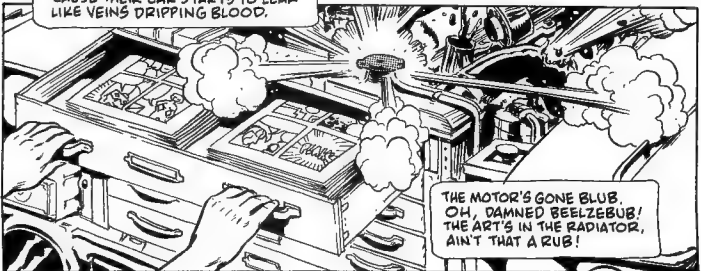
ONE OF THE CLUB,
WHO'S ALWAYS A FLUB,
MAKES THE MISTAKE
OF LOSING THEIR GRUB.



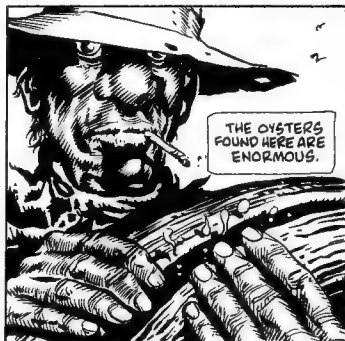
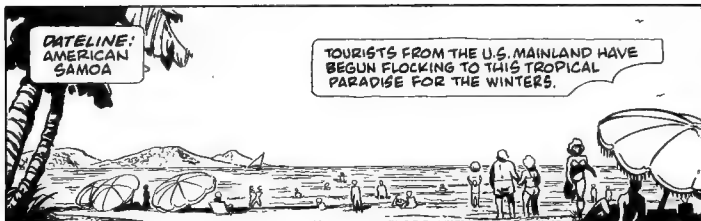
STEVE'S IN A HUBBUB
AND RICK'S FEELING SNUBBED,
'TIL A MUTT FINDS THE BAG
AND SCARFES UP AL'S SUB.

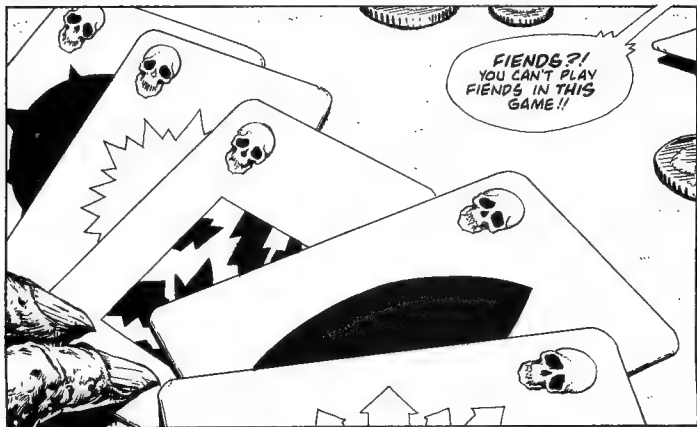


THEY SEARCH FOR A PUB,
BUT THE MISSION GETS SCRUBBED,
'CAUSE THEIR CAR STARTS TO LEAK
LIKE VEINS DRIPPING BLOOD.



THE MOTOR'S GONE BLUB.
OH, DAMNED BEELZEBUB!
THE ART'S IN THE RADIATOR,
AIN'T THAT A RUB!





POLLY WOG-WOG
THREE MEN ON A JOG,
ON A BLUSTERY DAY,
IN A BLANKET OF FOG.

IN LOUD MONOLOGUES,
THEY BLEATED LIKE HOGS,
CAUSE THEY FELT THEY WERE TREATED
LIKE DIRTY OLD DOGS.



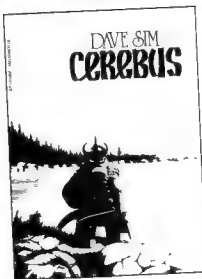
THEY LAY DOWN LIKE LOGS,
BUT SOON THEY GOT SOGGED,
FOR THE MANICURED LAWNS
WERE AS WET AS A BOG.



THEY LEAPED UP LIKE FROGS,
TO DRY OUT THEIR TOGS,
BUT THE WIND STOLE THEIR PORK-PIES,
AND SHOWED THEIR BALD NOGS!



CEREBUS: THE FIRST HALF

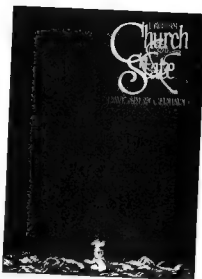


CEREBUS reprints Cerebus 1 to 25
500 pages \$25

The Cerebus volume introduces the cast of characters including Elrod the Albino, Red Sophia, Jaka, the Cockroach (later Captain Cockroach with Elrod as Bunky the Albino), Lord Julius, President Weisshaupt and many more.

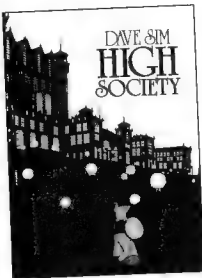
HIGH SOCIETY reprints Cerebus 26 to 50
500 pages \$25

Cerebus gets swept up into the world of high power politics in Iest and runs for Prime Minister. Introduces Astoria, Filgate, Blakely, the Regency Elf, Dirty Fleagle and his brother Dirty Drew McGrew, Duke Leonardi. The Roach becomes Moon Roach and Sergeant Preston of the Royal Mounted Iestian police.



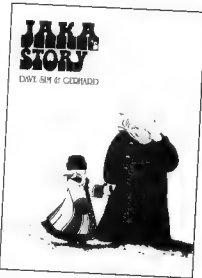
CHURCH & STATE Vol. I & II reprints Cerebus 52 to 111
1200 pages \$30 ea.

One of the longest single stories in the history of comics. Manipulated by President Weisshaupt, Cerebus finds himself married and then finds himself as Pope of the Eastern Church! Introduces Mrs. Henrot-Gutch (Cerebus' mother-in-law), Boobah, Bear, Bishop Powers, Bishop Posey, Mick and Keef and many more. The Roach becomes Wolveroach and the Secret Sacred Wars Roach. Also, in volume II, is the Flaming Carrot cross-over.



JAKA'S STORY reprints Cerebus 114 to 136
500 pages \$25

Cerebus returns to find his life in ruins and ends up as a houseguest of the love of his life, Jaka, and her new husband Rick. Introduces Oscar the poet, Pud, the tavern-owner, and Mrs. Thatcher.



MELMOTH reprints Cerebus 139 to 150
250 pages \$17

Cerebus, mistakenly believing that Jaka is dead, takes up residence in Dino's Cafe, clutching Jaka's childhood doll, Missy and his sword. The other half of the story is a faithful retelling of the last days of Oscar Wilde. The Roach becomes normalroach. Introduces Doris, Dino, Janice, Robbie and Reggie. Cameo appearances by Mick and Keef.

and
CEREBUS NUMBER ZERO
(reprinting the 'in-between' stories from
Cerebus 51, 112/113 and 137-138) (\$2.25)

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THE SECOND HALF BEGINS HERE

FLIGHT

DAVE SIM & GERHARD



FLIGHT reprints Cerebus 151 to 162
250 pages \$17

Cerebus explodes into action in the second half of the 300 issue story-line. Trapped in Iest, hunted by the Cirinists, Cerebus battles back. Featuring Punisherroach as well as the unexpected reappearance of many early Cerebus characters, including the first (visual) appearance of Suentius Pol

WOMEN

DAVE SIM & GERHARD



NEW IN '94!

WOMEN reprints Cerebus 163 to 174
250 pages \$17

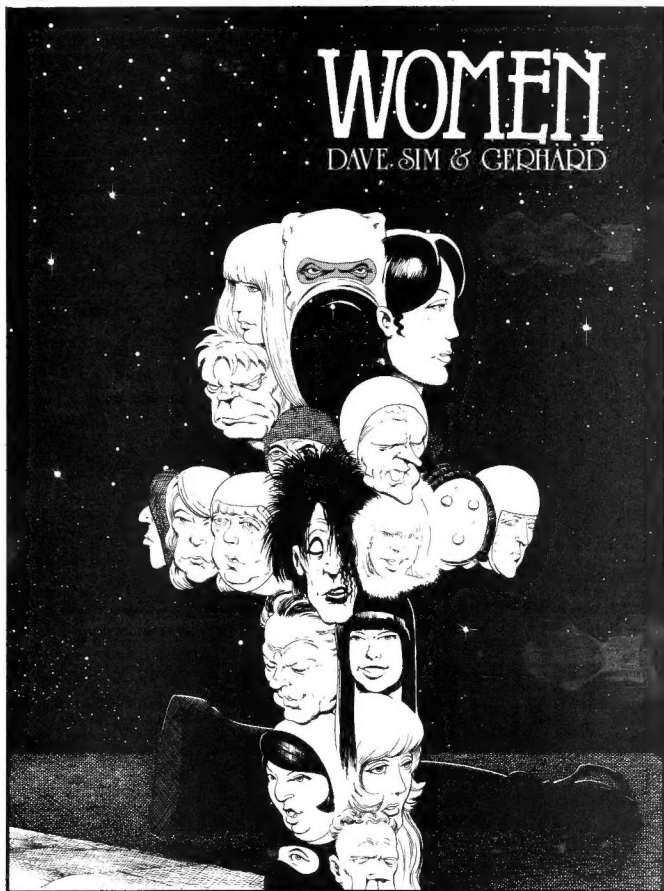
The second half continues as Astoria and Cirin contend for the fabled Final Ascension. Features Swoon, Snuff, Sleaze, Sulk and more in the highly-acclaimed (even by Neil Gaiman!) Sandman parody, as well as virtually every female character introduced in the Cerebus storyline to date.

WOMEN (Mothers & Daughters Book Two) will be available in a signed and numbered first printing and regular edition from Aardvark-Vanaheim in May 1994. If you had specified the same number when ordering previous CEREBUS volumes or don't have access to a comic shop willing to order this book, we will be taking advance orders by phone and mail (until April 15 for the signed and numbered edition). Please contact us as soon as possible if you want a specific number. First come, first served.

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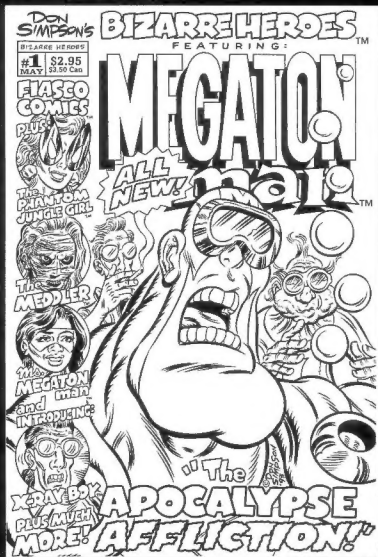


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Roarin' Rick Veitch -- probably the most overworked cartoonist in the history of his field. At the height of his career he found a way to squeeze even more comics out.

He's Looking for People Who Like to Doze

TODAY HUNDREDS of overworked men and women who never thought they could find more time in their busy schedules are working four, six, even up to eight extra hours a day and sometimes even getting paid for it. They can all thank Roarin' Rick Veitch, the desperately overburdened artist who discovered a way to increase his deadline production by 30%!

Since he often fell asleep at the drawing board anyway, Roarin' Rick reasoned that if he could keep his hands working while his mind slept, he could augment his output tremendously. As it went, he was often in a stupor, even when awake! So, Roarin' Rick created a series of self-hypnotic phrases which he repeated over and over as he bashed-out a 64-pager and nodded off.

RARE BIT FIENDS

When Roarin' Rick awoke, he was astonished to find a complete comic page waiting for him, one he had no conscious recollection of working on! Stranger still, these auto-illustrated artifacts seemed to accurately depict his most secret and personal dreams! With a nod to the revered Winsor McCay, Rick called these mysterious subliminal comics his 'RARE BIT FIENDS' and went on to produce hundreds of them, marveling at their strangely fascinating storylines and the intriguingly symbolic roles his friends and co-workers acted out in them.

SOME OF THE PEOPLE ROARIN' RICK HAS DREAMT ABOUT

Sturdy Steve Bissette: Author/Artist/Self-Publisher of 'TYRANT' and perennial Sixty-Three wage slave, who shares Sweatshop Studio space and atmosphere with Roarin' Rick. "Now I know how the sunbitch really feels about my various personality disorders!"

Dave Sim: Author/Artist/Self-Publisher of 'CEREBUS' and fellow workaholic. "They're telling you to self-publish, stupid."

Affable Al Moore: Heartless boss and 39-year old adolescent. "I don't care if you ARE asleep -- if you're drawing comics, they better be OUR comics!"

Jaunty John Tolleben: Collaborator on upcoming 'HELLHEAD' and Sweatshop Stablemate. "Heh -- you should see MY dreams sometime!"

Neil Gaiman: Author of the OTHER comic book about dreams. "I like the part where I'm Uncle Fester. I mean...it was lovely."

Cindy Veitch: Fellow dreamer and long-suffering spouse. "Alright -- who are these BIMBOS you've been dreaming about?"

A PLAN TO DO MORE 'RARE BIT FIENDS'

Under threat of impending litigation from his friends and co-workers after they saw themselves in 'RARE BIT FIENDS', Roarin' Rick said: "Bzzsnork...snk. Huh? Oh...yeah. I bet there are people all over the world who might like to read something really weird like this. Why not give these readers the benefit of my years

chained to the drawing board -- including all the unconscious complexes I've developed over my career?" Roarin' Rick envisioned a new kind of 'RARE BIT FIENDS', more lavishly executed than his first sketchbook prototypes, distributed to the masses, offering readers a direct link to the most primitive reptilian levels of his mind!

Roarin' Rick's employer was appalled. He couldn't believe the Roarin' One had taken time from his overburdened deadline schedule to work on such foolhard. But when he saw his artist's productivity rise from eleven to twelve books a month, even he had to agree. Roarin' Rick had developed a way to spend even more time at the drawing board. Affable Al tried many methods, including hypnosis, drug therapy and electro-shock stimulation, to direct Roarin' Rick's newfound output away from 'RARE BIT FIENDS' and into more Sizzling Sixty-Three Spectaculars, to no avail.

After the Roarin' One's nervous collapse, his psychoanalyst was not surprised that the patient's unconscious mind resisted such attempts to control it, citing studies done on the dreams of concentration camp inmates during the court hearings. And now, armed with a judge's order giving him the right to dream whatever he wants, Roarin' Rick is back at the board, fast asleep, cranking out new and exciting pages of 'RARE BIT FIENDS'. Look for it in 1994 from KING HELL PRESS!

FAMOUS ARTISTS ROARIN' RICK DREAMS ABOUT

Marilyn Monroe
Roy Lichtenstein
L.M. Pei
Brigitte Bardot
Boody Rogers
Don Van Vliet
Sophia Loren
Bob Dylan
Toulouse-Lautrec

**ROARIN' RICK'S
RARE BIT
FIENDS**

